

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

The listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

1. (Currently Amended) A medical implant system comprising:
a first bone anchor having a longitudinal axis;
a second bone anchor; and
a brace for coupling the first bone anchor to the second bone anchor, wherein the brace has a distal portion which is adapted to be pivotally coupled to the first bone anchor and slidably mated with a proximal portion of at least one of the bone anchors and adapted to slide in a generally transverse direction in relation to the longitudinal axis of the first bone anchor.
2. (Previously Amended) The system of claim 1 wherein the distal end of the brace is adapted for transferring torque and compressive force from the brace to at least one of the bone anchors.
3. (Currently Amended) The system of claim 1 wherein the brace further comprises:
a mating receptacle coupled to the second bone; and
wherein the brace has a proximal end, the proximal end adapted for locking with a the mating receptacle attached to the proximal end of a the second bone anchor, locking occurring when the distal end of the brace pivots with respect to the proximal end of the first bone anchor, the pivoting occurring while the distal end of the brace remains pivotally mated with the proximal end of the first bone anchor.
4. (Previously Amended) The system of claim 3 wherein the receptacle allows for polyaxial rotation with respect to the second bone anchor.
5. (Previously Amended) The system of claim 3 wherein the receptacle is a force fit with respect to the proximal end of the brace.
6. (Previously Amended) The system of claim 3 wherein the receptacle provides positive feedback when the proximal end of said brace is properly mated with the receptacle.

7. (Previously Amended) The system of claim 1 further comprising:
a hinge attached to a proximal end of the first bone anchor for facilitating the pivotal mating.

8. (Previously Amended) The system of claim 7 wherein the hinge allows for polyaxial rotation with respect to the first bone anchor.

9. (Previously Amended) The system of claim 1 wherein the proximal end of the brace is further adapted to accept torque applied thereto.

10-19. (Canceled)

20. (Previously Amended) The system of claim 7, wherein the hinge comprises:
proximal and distal openings in-line from each other forming an in-line passage through the hinge;

the distal opening comprising a clamp for rotatable attachment to the head of a bone anchor;

the proximal opening adapted to accept the distal end of a brace prior to the bone anchor being secured in a bone, the hinge further comprising a pivot point for capturing an accepted brace so as to allow the accepted brace to pivot with respect to the hinge but not to become released therefrom; and wherein the clamp allows the distal end of an accepted brace to become detachable coupled to the head of an attached anchor for the purpose of force transfer between the brace and the anchor.

21. (Previously Amended) The hinge of claim 20 wherein the proximal end of the hinge is further adapted to accept a force applying locking structure.

22. (Previously Amended) The hinge of claim 20 wherein the pivot includes at least one pair of bearings positioned on either side of the in-line passage.

23. (Previously Amended) The system of claim 1, wherein the brace comprises:
a curved shank portion slightly longer than the distance between the bones to be supported; the shank comprising:

a first key at its distal end for releasably mating with a head of a first anchor so as to allow torque transfer between the brace and the first bone anchor; and

a second key at its proximal end for releasably mating with a receptacle at a second one of the bone anchors.

24. (Previously Presented) The brace of claim 23 wherein said shank further comprises:

at least one slot longitudinally displaced along the shank in proximity to the distal end, the slot for accepting a fulcrum point affixed to the first anchor so as to allow the brace to pivot around the fulcrum point while still maintaining the shank in controlled spatial relationship with the first bone anchor.

25. (Previously Presented) A medical implant device comprising:

a first bone anchor;

a second bone anchor; and

a brace comprising:

a means for pivoting the brace from a first position to a second position, wherein in the second position the brace couples the first bone anchor to the second bone anchor;

a means for slidingly adjusting the means for pivoting along the longitudinal length of the brace; and

a means for transmitting torque between the brace and the at least one of the bone anchors.

26. (Previously Presented) The device of claim 25 wherein the supporting means comprises:

a pair of bearings displaced on opposite sides of the captured brace, the bearings interfacing with the brace by indentations longitudinally displaced along the brace.

27. (Canceled)

28. (Canceled)

29. (Previously Presented) The device of claim 26 wherein the brace comprises:
means for engaging a receptacle attached to the second bone anchor spaced apart from the first bone anchor, the device further comprising;

means for polyaxially attaching the receptacle to the head of the second bone anchor; and wherein the receptacle comprises means for engaging with the brace.

30. (Previously Presented) The device of claim 29 wherein the first and second anchor engagement means comprise:

means for locking the brace and the anchors in a fixed relationship with each other.

31-42. (Canceled)